The Central Government has taken a series of steps under the National Mineral Policy, 1993 including legislative amendments for facilitating private sector investment including foreign equity participation in the mineral sector. The Central Government has also issued guidelines for grant of large areas for prospecting. Further, the Central Government has allowed automatic route for foreign equity participation upto 50% in case of mining of iron ore, manganese ore, etc. besides certain non-metallic minerals. Higher equity participation can be allowed on case to case basis subject to the provisions of law. The difficulties pointed out in the news items are mainly covered in the agenda items taken up for discussion during the Conference of State Ministers/Secretaries of Mines and Geology held on 26th and 27th December, 1996 under the aegis of Ministry of Mines. A Committee under the Chairmanship of Secretary (Mines), Government of India with some State Secretaries of Mines and Geology, Secretary General, Federation of Indian Mineral Industries etc. has also been constituted to review, inter-alia, the existing procedures pertaining to grant of mineral concessions and to suggest measures to reduce delays in this regard at different levels. The Government has also been interacting with the investors in the mining sector with a view to identify their difficulties and solve them through detailed interaction with the State Governments. Geological data about mineral deposits investigated by Geological Survey of India (GSI) is available for sale at GSI sale counters.

[Translation]

Purchase of Cranes

2160. PROF. PREM SINGH CHANDUMAJRA:
PROF. AJIT KUMAR MEHTA:
SHRI SURENDRA YADAV:
SHRI SANAT KUMAR MANDAL:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have concluded a deal recently for purchasing the Cranes having capacity of 140 tonnes;

(b) if so, the number of Cranes and the price at which these Cranes are likely to be purchased and the name of the firm alongwith the country with whom this deal has been concluded;

(c) whether it is a fact that the Cranes of the same capacity can also be manufactured in the country;

(d) if so, the reasons for importing these Cranes from a foreign firm;

(e) whether the tenders were also received from other firms of the foreign countries; and

(f) if so, the names of such firms?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Order has been placed for 8 nos. Cranes @ Deutsche Marks 2.95 million (approx. equivalent to Rs. 6.91 crores) Free on Board per Crane on M/s Mannesmann Demag Fordertechnik AG Gottwald/Germany.

(c) Yes, Sir. Jamalpur Railway workshop is in the process of development of manufacturing similar cranes.

(d) Since the technology of these Cranes is yet to be developed indigenously and there is an urgent need for cranes as an accident relief equipment especially in converted routes, these 8 cranes are being imported to meet immediate requirements.

(e) Yes, Sir.

(f) In view of urgency, a limited tender was issued to 2 firms. The other being M/s Cowans Sheldon/U.K.

[English]

MTNL-Profit

2161. SHRI I.D. SWAMI: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Comptroller and Auditor General has observed that the MTNL has understated its profit for the year ending March, 31, 1996 by Rs. 109.10 crores;

(b) if so, the details of the CAG's observations; and

(c) the reaction of the Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Audit has observed that understatement of profit has taken place to the extent of Rs. 137.16 Crores on account of the depreciation policy and other matters and overstatement of profit to the extent of Rs. 28.06 Crores resulting in a net understatement of profit to the extent of Rs. 109.10 Crores.

(c) Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited Management has explained in detail the various points to CAG and have arrived at an ultimate figure of Rs. 0.39 crores of the overstatement of profit.

Child Labour

2162. SHRI BANWARI LAL PUROHIT: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether a seminar on child labour was organised by V.V. Giri National Labour Institute, Noida recently; and

(b) if so, the details of the discussions held in the seminar and outcome thereof?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR (SHRI M. ARUNACHALAM): (a) and (b) A seminar on child labour was organised by the V.V. Giri National Labour Institute, Noida, on 27th January, 1997. It was attended by the Chairpersons and Project Directors of the National Child Labour Projects, NGOs, trade unions, employers organisations and the